commodities and has put in place a suitable mechanism for giving adeuqate protection to domestic producers through calibration of applied tariffs within the bound levels, and imposition of anti-dumping, anti-subsidy countervailing duty or safeguard action in accordance with relevant rules and disciplines of the WTO. Simultaneously, the Government provides support to Indian farmers by way of price support schemes, and various types of assistance under production programmes for different crops.

In the on-going negotiations in agriculture in the WTO, India along with other WTO Members with similar interests and concerns have sought fundamental reform of the agriculture sector in developed countries through substantial reduction in trade-distorting domestic support and elimination of export subsidies by them. India has also indicated that adequate safeguards for domestic farmers must be provided in order to address situations of international price volatility and import surges. The negotiations are scheduled to be concluded by 1 January, 2005.

The Government reviews its farm policy from time to time depending upon the exigencies of the situation and international developments.

Import of natural rubber

739. SHRI V. V. RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the ban on import of natural rubber has been removed and the Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has permitted import of natural rubber under the advance licence scheme;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether Government are aware that this step would have adverse impact on the rubber growers in the country especially in Kerala?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Import of Natural Ruber has been made free *w.e.f.* 1.4.2001 as part of the removal of Quantitative Restrictions from large number of items for imports. Under the Exim Policy, exporters are entitled to import inputs

duty free for the manufacture of items for export under the Advance Licence Scheme as per the Standard Input Output Norms (SION) fixed for a particular item. Certain restrictions has been put in place for import of Natural Rubber duty free under this scheme. The Public Notices and the Policy Circulars imposing such restrictions have been set aside by the Bombay High Court. The SLP filed by the Government against this order was not admitted by the Supreme Court. As a result, restrictions imposed on import of Natural Rubber under the Advance Licence Scheme and stand removed.

(c) The Government is keenly monitoring the price as well as import of Natural Rubber in the country and will take appropriate action, if there is an undue surge in the import of Natural Rubber.

Liberalisation of norms for foreign technology agreements

740. SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have liberalised the norms with regard to foreign technology agreements;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of agreements signed during the last three years; and

(d) the royalty paid against providing technological know-how to these countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI CHENNAMANENI VIDYASAGAR RAO): (a) and (b) With a view to making industries increasingly competitive, the Government has progressively liberalized the policy on the Foreign Technology Collaboration Agreement by undertaking, *inter alia*, the following meausres:

(i) The limit of lumpsum payment for Technology Collaboration under the automatic route was increased from Rs. 1 crore to US $ 2 million in 1996.

(ii) Royalty payment by wholly owned subsidiaries to their offshore parent companies was permitted under automatic route in the year 2000.